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STEEP RISE REPORTED IN MONTANA HEALTH CARE WORKERS' EARNINGS

MISSOULA--

The health care industry is one of the fastest growing components of the Montana economy, according to an article written by a University of Montana economist.

Paul E. Polzin, research associate at the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, discussed the importance of health care to the Montana economy in the summer 1981 issue of the Montana Business Quarterly.

Polzin said the labor earnings of health care workers in Montana increased 49 percent between 1972 and 1979, after adjusting for inflation. Those earnings, he said, accounted for about 6.1 percent of total nonfarm earnings in 1979, up from approximately 5.5 percent in 1972.

Among Montana's four major counties, Polzin reported that Yellowstone County appears to have the fastest growing health care industry. Earnings of health care employees there increased 67 percent between 1972 and 1979. Missoula County showed an increase of 54 percent during the same period, and Cascade County's increase was 31 percent. Earnings of health care employees increased in Lewis and Clark County by only 16 percent between 1972 and 1979, but Polzin said the closure of St. John's Hospital in the mid-1970s affected that increase.

Polzin also presented information on the place of residence of patients released from hospitals in each of Montana's major urban areas. These figures give some idea of the market area served by the health care industry in each city, he said.

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